

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

IGA-01 FBO-02 A-01 OMB-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 OPR-02 /075 W

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P R 081225Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4710

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL UDORN

DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI UDORN

17TH AD DET 1 UDORN

17TH AD DET 1 OL1B NKP

13TH AF CC CLARK AFB

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 VIENTIANE 4735

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, US

SUBJ: DISCUSSION OF OCCUPIED COMPOUNDS WITH FONMIN OFFICIAL

SUMMARY: DESPITE OUR EFFORTS, JULY 8 WAS FIRST OCCASION WE HAVE HAD TO DISCUSS WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY OCCUPATION OF OUR COMPOUNDS SINCE WE RECEIVED FONMIN NOTE JULY 4. LITTLE EMERGED OTHER THAN THE NEWS THAT THE MINISTRY IS PLANNING TO ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE TO DEAL WITH US ON COMPOUNDS AND OTHER MATTERS. FONMIN OFFICIAL RAISED DIRECTLY, FOR FIRST TIME IN A MONTH, THE PGNU REQUEST FOR NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT "A NEW BASIS" FOR U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO LAOS, AND WE MADE CLEAR THAT OTHER MATTERS HAD TO BE SETTLED FIRST. THE OFFICIAL WITH WHOM WE DEALT WAS THE ASSISTANT TO THE MINISTER'S CHEF DE CABINET, BUT, BEING PATHET LAO, THE ONLY OFFICIAL IN FONMIN WHO CAN DEAL WITH PROBLEMS. ALL OTHERS -- THE NEW SECRETARY OF STATE, AND THE MINISTRY'S SECRETARY GENERAL -- INDICATED THEY HAD NO AUTHORITY IN THIS MATTER. END SUMMARY.

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1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND ACTING PAO CALLED JULY 8 ON SOUKTHAVONE KEOLA, ATTACHE DE CABINET TO FOREIGN MINISTER, TO DISCUSS MINISTRY'S NOTE OF JULY 4 AND PROBLEMS RELATED THERETO. WE HAD BEEN TRYING TO ARRANGE SUCH DISCUSSIONS SINCE MORNING JULY 5; NO OTHER MFA OFFICIAL WANTED TO TOUCH THE SUBJECT. SOUKTHAVONE SAID HIS BOSS, CHEF DE CABINET SOUBANH SRITHIRATH, HAD LEFT VIENTIANE JULY 7 FOR A THREE-OR-FOUR-DAY MISSION TO THE "LIBERATED ZONE." FOREIGN MINISTER LEFT SAME DAY FOR HANOI AND PEKING, FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT.

2. FIRST EFFORT WAS TO DETERMINE WHAT AUTHORITY SOUKTHAVONE HAD TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH US, AND WITH WHOM WE SHOULD DISCUSS THEM IF HE DID NOT. HE SAID A COMMITTEE WOULD BE APPOINTED TO DEAL WITH US ON ISSUE OF PROPERTIES, BUT HE DID NOT YET KNOW WHEN IT WOULD BE CONSTITUTED AND PREPARED TO MEET, OR WHO WOULD SERVE ON IT. HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE NO MORE THAN TWO OR THREE OFFICIALS, AND ALL FROM MFA, POSSIBLY INCLUDING HIMSELF; HE HOPED TO HAVE FURTHER WORD ON THIS BY JULY 9, BUT MEANWHILE WAS PREPARED TO LISTEN TO WHATEVER WE HAD TO SAY ABOUT NOTE AND RELATED PROBLEMS.

3. POL COUNSELOR URGED THAT, IF PGNU REALLY CONSIDERED COMMITTEE NECESSARY, IT BE SMALL -- UNLIKE THE 21-MEMBER GROUP REPRESENTING HALF-DOZEN OR MORE MINISTRIES THAT HAD BEEN APPOINTED TO DEAL WITH USAID AND HAD PROVED MOST UNSATISFACTORY. HE ALSO SAID EMBASSY REPS WOULD BE PREPARED TO MEET WITH PGNU COMMITTEE ON SHORT NOTICE AND DEPENDING ON SUBJECT MATTER OUR GROUP MIGHT INCLUDE REPS OF ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION, ALTHOUGH IT REMAINED OUR VIEW THAT PGNU COULD SOLVE PROBLEM ITSELF IN 30 MINUTES.

4. POL COUNSELOR THEN RAN THROUGH MFA NOTE, FIRST REGISTERING OBJECTION TO LANGUAGE ABOUT "WAR OF AGGRESSION" AND "ABUSE" OF DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES; ON CONTRARY, IT WAS PGNU'S FAILURE TO RESPECT THE IMMUNITY OF ALL MISSION PROPERTY THAT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY OF CURRENT PROBLEMS.

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5. AT THIS AND LATER POINTS SOUKTHAVONE DIGRESSED INTO HISTORY, ALLEGING THAT USAID WAS INDEED A PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION; THAT UAE BY VIRTUE OF CONTRACTURAL LINK WITH USAID (GENERATORS) WAS THUS IN VIOLATION OF LAO AND INTERNATIONAL LAW; THAT DEMONSTRATION AGAINST USAID AND FOR THAT MATTER USIS REPRESENTED A WAVE OF POPULAR REACTION, ETC. IN SHORT, IT WAS THE USUAL LITANY ABOUT

"NEW REALITIES" THAT WE HAVE HEARD MANY TIMES IN RECENT WEEKS. SOUKTHAVONE IS AMONG THE MORE MILD-MANNERED IN PROPOUNDING THIS LINE, BUT IT IS NO MORE PLEASANT COMING FROM HIM THAN FROM ANYONE ELSE AND ULTIMATELY LEADS NOWHERE. WHEN FOR EXAMPLE POINT WAS MADE THAT US ACTIVITIES IN LAOS IN YEARS PAST WERE CARRIED OUT WITH APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENTS THEN IN POWER, AND INDEED FOR MANY YEARS WITH APPROVAL OF CURRENT PRIME MINISTER, SOUKTHAVONE REPLIED THAT LAO GOVERNMENT "WAS NOT THEN INDEPENDENT."

6. EXPRESSING DESIRE TO RETURN FROM HISTORY TO CURRENT PROBLEMS, POL COUNSELOR SAID MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE ISSUE AT PRESENT WAS CONTINUING ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF GSO AND SILVER CITY COMPOUNDS (PLUS USIS WAREHOUSE WHICH SOUKTHAVONE HIMSELF HAD TOLD US ON JULY 4 COULD BE RESTORED TO OUR CONTROL JULY 7). ONCE THIS HAD HAPPENED, EMBASSY ADMIN SERVICES COULD BE RESTORED AND INDEED REORGANIZED TO COMPENSATE FOR DEPARTURE OF UAE, WHOSE CONTRACT -- WHICH RUNS UNTIL NOVEMBER 30 -- WE HAD PLANNED TO SCALE DOWN ANYWAY BECAUSE OF REDUCED SIZE OF MISSION. EMBASSY COULD IN FACT TERMINATE UAE CONTRACT WITHOUT OVERWHELMING PROBLEMS BY GIVING COMPANY REQUIRED ONE MONTH'S NOTICE, PROVIDED ALWAYS THAT WE WERE ABLE TO WORK AT GSO AND HAD TIME TO MAKE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS. HOWEVER, WE COULD NOT ACCEPT PROPOSITION THAT MFA COULD DICTATE INTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF OUR MISSION. CHAPMAN

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P R 081225Z JUL 75

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 VIENTIANE 4735

13. WITH HOUR-PLUS DISCUSSION OF NOTE AND USIS WAREHOUSE THUS COMPLETED, SOUKTHAVONE SAID HE WANTED TO ASK WHEN USG WOULD BE PREPARED TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS ON NEW BASIS FOR US ECONOMIC AID TO LAOS AS REQUESTED BY MINISTER IN AN EARLY-JUNE NOTE; COULDN'T WE AT LEAST TALK ABOUT BASIC AGREEMENT, EVEN IF DETAILS WOULD REQUIRE LATER DELIBERATION. THIS GAVE US OPENING TO RETURN TO COMPOUND QUESTION; POL COUNSELOR SAID CLIMATE WAS NOT PROPITIOUS FOR SUCH DISCUSSION WHILE EMBASSY PROPERTIES WERE OCCUPIED AND EMBASSY ITSELF COULD NOT FUNCTION NORMALLY. POL COUNSELOR RECALLED PASSAGE IN OUR JUNE 9 NOTE WHICH SAID PROGRESS OF USAID NEGOTIATIONS WOULD HAVE EFFECT ON FUTURE RELATIONS; USAID NEGOTIATIONS HAD GONE NOWHERE, AND SINCE THEN PGNU HAD TOLERATED NEW INDIGNITIES AGAINST US MISSION. HE

PROPOSED THAT AS FIRST STEP PGNU RESTORE COMPOUNDS TO
OUR CONTROL, THAT WE THEN RZNRGANIZE OUR ADMINISTRA-
TIVE STRUCTURE SO AS TO ELIMINATE UAE, AND SEE WHAT
MIGHT FOLLOW AFTER THAT. WHEN WOULD COMPOUNDS BE
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TURNED BACK TO US?

14. SOUKTHAVONE HAD NO DIRECT REPLY BUT REVERTED TO
AN EARLIER IDEA, NOT CLEARLY FORMULATED, ABOUT
POSSIBILITY THAT AMERICAN AND LAO EMPLOYEES OF EMBASSY
COULD RETURN TO WORK AT GSO IN DAY OR TWO, BUT WITH
UNSPECIFIED ELEMENTS (EITHER PROTESTORS OR PATHET
LAO POLICE OR BOTH) REMAINING ON SCENE TO GUARD AND PROVIDE
SURVEILLANCE OF PREMISES, PREVENT REMOVAL OF PROPERTY,
ETC. POL COUNSELOR SAID EXPERIENCE OF NA HAI DIAO COM-
POUND AFTER MAY 27 AGREEMENT PROVIDED THAT THIS DID NOT WORK;
ARMED CIVILIANS STROLLED AROUND THE COMPOUND, POLICE DID
NOT REMAIN OUTSIDE GATES, AND IT WAS REMARABLE THAT
USAID EMPLOYEES, BOTH LAO AND AMERICAN, HAD
BEEN ABLE TO
ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING AT ALL IN SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE OF
THREAT AND INTIMIDATION. WE COULD NOT WORK UNDER SUCH
CONDITIONS ANYWHERE AGAIN, AND HE REMINDED SOUKTHAVONE
OF CONVERSATION WITH SOUBANH EARLY MORNING JUNE 28
AT WHICH TIME IT WAS AGREED THAT NO AMERICAN OR LAO
EMPLOYEES OF GSO OR UAE WOULD RETURN TO WORK UNTIL
PROBLEMS HAD BEEN RESOLVED IN THEIR ENTIRETY. HE
REITERATED NEED FOR RESTORATION OF COMPOUNDS TO OUR
CONTROL AS FIRST STEP.

15. SOUKTHANVONE MADE NO OTHER COMMITMENTS THAN TO
TELEPHONE POL COUNSELOR JULY 9 REGARDING COMPOSITION
OF PGNU COMMITTEE AND ANY OTHER PROPOSALS PGNU MIGHT
HAVE REGARDING RETURN TO WORK AT COMPOUNDS, AND TO
TELEPHONE APAO ABOUT USIS WAREHOUSE.

16. COMMENT: WE SEEM TO HAVE ADVANCED VERY LITTLE
BEYOND SIMILAR EXCHANGES WITH SOUKTHAVONE JUNE 29 AND
30. HE HIMSELF DOES NOT HAVE MUCH AUTHORITY, AND WITH
SOUBANH ABSENT FROM VIENTIANE WE ARE NOT EVEN SURE TO
WHOM HE WILL REPORT. THE IDEA OF A COMMITTEE, EVEN
ONE SOLELY FROM MFA, DOES NOT STIR VISIONS OF RAPID OR
CONSTRUCTIVE DEALINGS EITHER, ALTHOUGH IT COULD
PRESENT A MEANS OF RESOLVING SOME OF THE ISSUES;
WE INTEND TO KEEP PRODDING UNTIL COMMITTEE SHOWS ITS
FACE AND MANDATE. CHARGE PLANS TO TRY PRIMIN AGAIN.
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WE BELIEVE WE HAVE GOTTEN ACROSS THE IDEA, HOWEVER,
THAT THERE ARE OTHER THINGS TO BE ATTENDED TO B
WE CAN EVEN BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS FOR
"A NEW BASIS FOR AID." IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER
PGNU IS NOW SEEKING TO LINK THE FUTURE-AID ISSUE WITH
THE RESTORATION OF OUR PROPERTY.
CHAPMAN

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TAGS: PFOR, LA, US, PGNU, (SOUKTHAVONE KEOLA)
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